844 As soon as the child has made his appearance one of the
846 midwives ties the *umbilical cord* (likabana) near the navel and cuts it about three inches from it. The little sore is anointed with a kind of fat ; the bit of cord remaining with the baby is attended to with great care : it generally falls off at the end of the first week, and this is the signal for the end of the period of confinement.

The after-birth, the *placenta*, is also looked for with much anxiety : it is called *yindlu ya ñwana*, the "house of the child," or *hlalu*. When it is delayed too long, the midwives begin to fear "because the blood which is inside has not all come out and will kill the mother." In the Khosa clan, should the placenta not come at once, the woman is told to stand on her feet, her body half bent forward, and all the midwives begin to move their index fingers from right to left, emitting at the same time the following sound : tswi-tswi-tswi-tswi. This is said to help the placenta to come. The placenta is generally buried deep behind the hut on the spot where the birth has taken place ; but some prefer to bury it inside the house, fearing the dogs might unearth it, which is taboo.

The child is then washed with water. This water is thrown away as being polluted by the blood of the birth, which is taboo.

553 *Naming the child*. On the day of birth or on one of the following
787 days the child receives his name (bito). There are four principal ways of choosing this.

1) Often the parents give their offspring *the name of a chief* as Musongi, Makasana, Muzila, etc. It flatters their vanity !

2) But frequently the parents like to recall a name of the old times (pfusha bito dja khale), the name of one of the ancestors, because it is a good thing to remember them. They go so far as to consult the bones. A name is proposed, and if the bones in falling do not give a favourable indication, another is tried till they feel sure that the die "has spoken" (1).

553 3) Or it may be that somebody asks the favour of giving his
608

(1) The Christian Natives like to ask their missionary to choose the name, perhaps for a similar reason.

## II. *The first week ; Confinement Period.*

846 733 863 From the day of birth till the moment when the umbilical cord falls, seven days may elapse : this forms a special period called *busahana*, which is the period of confinement for both mother and child. It will be concluded by the special ceremony of the child's first outing, marked by the rite of the broken pot. During these seven or eight days, *the mother* is restricted to a special diet, and this is a true "marginal period" for her. She is absolutely outside the pale of society. The diet is prescribed by the family doctor, who knows how to treat children, and consists of a special dish prepared with Kafir corn (1) (mabele) and called *shimhimbi*, with which special medicines have been mixed. The aim of this medication (khwebela busahana) is twofold : first to expel the unclean blood which follows the birth, and which is a very great taboo, and secondly to stimulate the production of the milk. This food is cooked in a special pot (shikhwebelo sha busahana) and is eaten not with the hands, as some particles of the unclean blood might enter it and cause the mother to become phthisic, but with a special spoon.

846 Both the pot and the spoon will be fastened over the entrance of the hut, inside (shirangen sha nyangwa), at the end of this period of seclusion.

A fowl is also killed during these first days, a hen if the child is a girl, a cock if it is a boy. Some medicinal powder is poured into the broth, and the mother drinks it and eats part of the meat, the husband eating the remainder. This little luxury is indulged in as it helps the mother to recover her strength sooner ; she is attended to by her own mother, who has been summoned as soon as the birth has been satisfactorily effected, and who helps her to feed the child.

262 (1) This use of Kafir corn in this and other old rites proves the antiquity of this cereal. It is probably the first which was known to the Natives. Maize is quite a modern food amongst the Thongas, though the time of its introduction is not known. See Part IV.

846 853 As regards *the child*, the umbilical cord is anointed every day; he begins to take the breast and drink the "*milombyana*," the great medicine which we shall describe later on.

During these days many taboos must be observed:

The *husband* is not allowed to enter the hut on any pretext; this is not on account of his being unclean, quite the contrary. A birth does not contaminate the father amongst the Ba-Thonga as it does in other tribes. He is not obliged to undergo any medication. His exclusion from the conjugal hut is due entirely to the fact that his wife is polluted by the blood of the lochia, and he would run the greatest danger to himself if he came near.

846 854 *All married people* are also excluded (bakhili) viz. all those who have regular sexual intercourse. Should they touch the child, he would die. If however a woman wishes very much to go and see the new-born, she must abstain from relations with her husband during two days. Then she can be admitted into the hut. On the other hand young girls are welcome in the hut, but they must not kiss the baby during these first days. "It is not yet firm; it is only water," as they say; later on, when it begins to laugh and to play, they may kiss it. Even the father may do so then; when he comes back from a journey, he holds it in his arms and kisses it on the temple. Supposing that the 846 umbilical cord has now fallen off normally, the confinement period will be at an end. This termination is marked by two rites.

The mother of the delivered woman will have *to smear with clay the floor of the hut*. This is the great cleansing act which brings to an end a marginal period. It takes away all the dangerous blood, and the husband as well as all the other dwellers in the village will be allowed to enter the hut.

846 751 278 825 The second act is *the rite of the broken pot* (ku tjibelela shirengelen, viz. to make fire under the shirengele, the bit of broken pot used for the purpose). This is a medical treatment and a religious ceremony combined. It is performed by the family doctor on the threshold of the hut in the following way: he puts into this piece of broken pottery pieces of skin of all the beasts of the bush: antelopes, wild cats, elephants, hippopotami, rats, civet cats, hyenas, elands and snakes of dangerous kinds, and roasts

846 751 825 278 856 them till they burn. The smoke then rises, and he exposes the child to it for a long time : the body, face, nose and mouth. The baby begins to cry ; he sneezes, he coughs ; this is just what is wanted. Then the doctor takes what remains of the pieces of skin, grinds them, makes a powder, mixes it with *tihuhlu* (1) grease of the year before last and consequently hard enough to make an ointment. With this ointment he rubs the whole body of the child, especially the joints, which he extends gently in order to assist the baby's growth.

846 751 853 All this fumigation and manipulation is intended to act as a preventive. Having been thus exposed to all external dangers, dangers which are represented by the beasts of the bush, the child may go out of the hut. He is now able "to cross the foot prints of wild beasts" (tjemakanya mitila) without harm. Snakes will not bite him, at any rate their bite will not hurt him ; lions will not kill him. The remainder of the powder is put into a little bit of reed closed at both ends, which the mother has to carry with her during the whole nursing period in order to continue the treatment.

846 756 763 821 This rite of the broken pot is also the great preventive remedy against the much dreaded ailment of babies, *convulsions*. If a child suffers from this, they will say : "a tlalile shirengelen," viz. "he did not find any help in the broken pot" and the parents will go to another doctor whose drugs are more powerful, to have the child once more exposed to the smoke. It may even be that a grown-up man will undergo this treatment again, if he has been ill with convulsions, but, in this case, the broken pot with its pieces of skin is put on the [illegible] the patient, which has been first covered with a wisp of [illegible]are dja yendjeyendje). The great aim of all the medication of children by the "milombyana" is also to fight against convulsions, as we shall see (2).

(1) The tihuhlu are the seeds of the nhuhlu tree known under the name of mafurra. They are oleaginous and the fat (mafura) obtained from them is very much used for external applications amongst the Thongas.

(2) In *Savage Childhood* p. 12, Dudley Kidd describes this "baptism of smoke" amongst Zulus. Some dirt is scraped from the father's body and is mixed with other drugs in order to impart to the child his ancestral spirit. Another ingredient

842 The Thonga child is always received into this world with great joy by the whole family. If it is a girl, it means oxen to buy a wife for one of the sons later on ; therefore it means increase not only in the wealth but in the number of the members of the family. If it is a boy, there is no direct material enrichment, but the clan has been strengthened and the name of the father is glorified and perpetuated. In the case of the birth of a first-born child (ñwana wa matibula), a special ceremony is performed at the end of the first week. When the grandmother has smeared the hut, she goes home, summons all the female relatives, sometimes as many as ten or fifteen ; they take with them food, ochre and fat prepared for this purpose. Two or three men accompany them. They enter the village of the child executing a special dance called *khana*, and singing the following song (which is the proper song to glorify a first-born) :

846 533 951 603

I celebrate my pot which has done *ngelebendje*...

They compare the child with a pot of clay which has gone through the firing process. It has been tried as one always tries a pot by letting it fall to the ground ; but it is not shattered, because it has not cracked in the furnace, it has kept intact ! This is what is meant by the descriptive adverb ngelebendje.

846 851 603 Then they smear the baby, the mother, the father, everybody in the village with ochre. It is a great feast. A goat will be killed, if possible, because the father and mother have "found a village" (kuma muti) by the child, they have "grown roots" (mila mitju). This is a law, but its omission is not taboo. When the grandparents do not perform this ceremony, it is an insult to the parents of the child, but no evil consequence will follow.

765 753 831 is a meteorite ground to fine powder. It is interesting to compare this use of the meteorite with the fact that, amongst the Thongas, this fumigation is intended to prevent convulsions. Convulsions, as we shall see (Part VI. Chap. II. B) are caused by the mysterious power of Heaven. The meteorite has fallen from Heaven. Thus the baptism of smoke aims at bringing the child under the influence of the two main elements of Bantu religion : the ancestor gods and Heaven.

846 For any subsequent children, the feast will be reduced to the
851 presentation by the grandmother of a basket of food to "*tlangela*
603 *ñwana*," viz. to "celebrate the child."

## III. *The Nursing Period.*

853 The little child has been taken out of the confinement hut (humesha busahanen). He is now allowed to go outside. The nursing period then begins and will last two and a half or three years; but before we study the rites which mark it, let us consider the manner in which the baby is carried and his diet during this period.

A South-African woman with her child in the ntehe.

### 1) The Ntehe.

854 A little child is not carried by his mother in her arms, but in a softened skin which is called *ntehe*. The preparation of the ntehe is subject to many prescribed customs.

The first of these is this: the ntehe must not be looked out before the birth of the child, or it would bring misfortune. This is a taboo which I might call a "taboo of prevision." Some other taboos of this kind are met with in our tribe.

[604] For a first-born child, the skin must be provided by the maternal uncle. This is a rule, but the custom is not tabooed (1). The father may also prepare it, if necessary.

825 The ntehe must not be a sheep skin.
854 That is taboo. Let them take the skin of a duiker (blue antelope), of a goat or of a mhala (impala). Sheep skins are

(1) Though the term taboo generally means a prohibition, I take the liberty of using it in a positive sense: A custom is taboo or is tabooed when its transgression is a taboo.

1: Junod M-5 (1895-1909)1927 Thonga



821 "Kengelekezeeeee!" and this exclamation is repeated from one village to another. *Kenge* is the descriptive adverb which means the form of the crescent of the moon. Each "moon," or month, is considered as being a new one, the old one having died, and there were special names for each month of the year (See Part VI).

[841] 856 828 821 852 As soon as the mother of the child has resumed her menses (the menses are called tinwheti, months) and this happens as a rule on the third month after the delivery amongst Thonga women, she takes her garments, washes them, puts on new clothing and then proceeds to the ceremony of the *yandla*. The child must be "given his month." This is done in the following way. The day the new moon appears, the mother takes with her a torch or merely a brand from the fire and the grandmother follows her carrying the child : both go to the ash-heap behind the hut. There the mother throws the burning stick towards the moon and the grandmother flings the child into the air saying : "This is your moon!" (hweti ya ku hi yoleyo) : then she puts the child on to the ashes. The little one cries and rolls over in the dirt on the ash-heap. Then his mother snatches him up (wutla), nurses him, and they go home.

This ceremony, which is certainly a rite of passage, is said to "open the chest of the child" otherwise "his ears would die," he would remain stupid. When a child is not intelligent, it is usual to say to him : You have not been shown your moon! (1)

852 846 854 Therefore the *yandla* means a progress made by the child, the entrance into a new phase of his existence. The fact is emphasised by the three following changes which take place on the day of the yandla : 1) Henceforth his father is allowed to take the child in his arms. Up to that day, this was taboo, as the child being continually with his mother was perhaps polluted by the dangerous blood following the birth ; but now she has washed her clothing and has been purified by the reappearance of the menses ; so the danger no longer exists. 2) It is now

(1) However the name of the child's month is soon forgotten and is never afterwards recalled. This seems to show that the custom is dying out, as well as the knowledge of the names of the various months.

1: Junod M-5 (1895-1909)1927 Thonga



# CHAPTER II

## The evolution of a woman from Birth to Death

*Essay of a Ronga girl on the subject.*

124 In July 1897, the School Inspector gave to the big girls of the Swiss Mission school at Lourenço Marques the following subject for an examination in composition: "The life of a Ronga woman." This is the translation of one of the pupils' essays on the life of their country women:

846 "When a girl is born amongst the Ba-Ronga, people come and congratulate the mother and say: "A ma buyeni mati," that is 302 to say: "Let the water come!" When the time is at hand when 854 she will come out of the hut, ochre is crushed for her and a calabash full of the fat of *nkuhlu* almond is prepared, and the two ingredients are mixed and smeared over her.

"Her curly hair is stretched out in corkscrew fashion, and ochre is put on it to transform it into a kind of rats' tails. (This is the operation called *hora ngoya*.) The mother also smears herself with ochre, and puts on her head a crown of small strings (shikupu) (1). Then, when the child lets her head fall on account of the weakness of her neck, a plaited string, which is just the right size for a necklace, is tied round her throat. 'Thus,' they say, 'her nape will be strengthened.'

854 "A small calabash with medicine is given her to drink; they also prepare for her a small pot of the medicine, and they say it

(1) I have heard this custom explained as follows: the mothers amuse the children by shaking their heads; the small strings dance about and make the babies laugh. This can only be true of infants already two or three months old.

to hinder the child from growing and to put in its place, by means of her enchantments, a snake, a hare, a quail or an antelope!

After the birth, owing to possible contamination by the lochia, sexual intercourse is prohibited till the rite of tying the cotton string (p. 56) has taken place. It is then allowed, but conception must be avoided till weaning, when relations are resumed in the normal way, and this goes on till the time when the woman is no longer able to bring forth children. I know of no special rules in connection with the menopause.

* * *

But, amongst Bantus, sexual relations are not an individual affair, as amongst nations more advanced in evolution. There is a mysterious relation between them and the collective life of the community. Hence the fact that, on certain given occasions, they are recommended, even ordered, or prohibited.

**1) Cases of recommendation.**

Sexual relations must take place on two principal occasions : when the inmates of a village abandon it and go elsewhere to found a new one, and when the widows perform the painful rite of "lahla khombo" (to cast away misfortune). We shall see, when studying these customs, that sexual relations have here a twofold signification : 1) they "consolidate" the little community in its new abode, viz. they strengthen its structure by confirming the authority of its chief ; 2) they provide the principal means of getting rid of all contamination, especially of the defilement connected with death. (Annotatio 13.)[1]

**2) Cases of prohibition.**

Married people are not considered as being in a state of defilement, as mourners are, for example. Yet this class of persons, called "ba-ku-khila," constitute a danger for those members of the community who are in a weak state of health. They must not come in contact with the circumcised, because in that case their wounds would not heal properly.

1 [See pp. 518-519 in these categories or in vol.--Analyst]

we shall discuss in Part VI the

843 834 841 origin of this extraordinary idea. A woman who has had a miscarriage is impure for three months at least. Menstruation must have taken place two or three times and have cleansed her before her husband can have any sexual relation with her. (Compare Annotatio 7,[1] which applies to the transgression of this rule.)

## 7) Parturition.

846 753 We have described, when treating of birth, the many taboos which accompany parturition. The *busahana* period, from the moment of delivery till the fall of the umbilical cord, is very much dreaded. When a woman is suffering from *shilumi* (a disease which sometimes follows delivery, probably owing to a displacement of the organs) she must not enter the hut of a woman who has been confined. The ailment would "jump over to her" (tlulela). There is however a way of preventing contagion. The visitor must take the piece of clothing which she uses as a girdle and throw it to the patient, and the patient throws back her own girdle to the visitor. Then she can enter : "They have acted according to the law, there is no more *yila*."

846 851 A mother must not drink any milk from the birth of the child until its presentation to the moon. Afterwards she is allowed to drink only milk from cows which have calved many times.

The rite of *kunga* is performed in the case of a first-born child. This child is called *nwana wa matibula*, the child by which the woman has *tibula*, viz. has become a mother. The etymology of this word *tibula* (Zulu zibula) is not known. When people come to greet the baby, its parents will not allow them to take it in their arms. They must pay something for permission to do so, even a brother, a sister, or a grandmother. The father is not subject to this rule ; "the child is his, belongs to him." Nowadays this ceremony means only that these people are happy to receive the new born child amongst them. There is no taboo in it. But it is certainly related to the fact that in giving birth to a child for the first time, the woman has passed from womanhood to motherhood.

1 [See p. 517 in these categories or in 116 - Analyse]

846 831 A demonstration of joy takes place at the birth of any subsequent child, but the kunga is only performed for the first-born. It does not seem that in the case of the first-born child, as in the case of bowumba (see p. 125) the gifts of kunga are subject to any taboo.

### 8) Loss of children.

766 783 834 853 A woman who loses an infant (wa ku felwa) is deeply contaminated with the defilement of death. She must bury it herself without aid from her husband. Next day, she goes behind the hut, kneels down and draws off her own milk on to the ground. She does this until the secretion has ceased. This is taboo ; her milk is polluted ; no drop of it must fall in the gardens. She must avoid crossing the fields and going to the storehouses to fetch food. 864 Until she has been "put right again (busetela)," she eats with a spoon. To use a spoon is a bad omen for a woman, because it reminds her of death. That is the reason why men adopt this civilized custom more readily than women. During her mourning, no sexual relations are allowed. When menstruation begins again, she first keeps silent, and does not tell her husband. Only on the second or third occasion does she inform him of the fact. He can then purify her ; this is done in the same way as in the case of widows. (See p. 154.) Then he buys new clothing for her and she resumes her ordinary mode of life. Everybody seeing her with this new attire will know that "she has been repaired." Should any one else than the husband give her this clothing, the latter will be greatly offended and accuse her of having relations with a lover.

765 586 A man does not put on *malopa*, mourning clothing, for a child who was not yet of age. The woman alone does so. However a husband is always grieved at the death of his child and a sad event like this often leads to dreadful results. He will begin to think that his wife is a witch and has eaten her own child by her magical powers. Such an accusation is almost sure to end in a divorce.

A woman who has *lost many children*, three or four, is considered